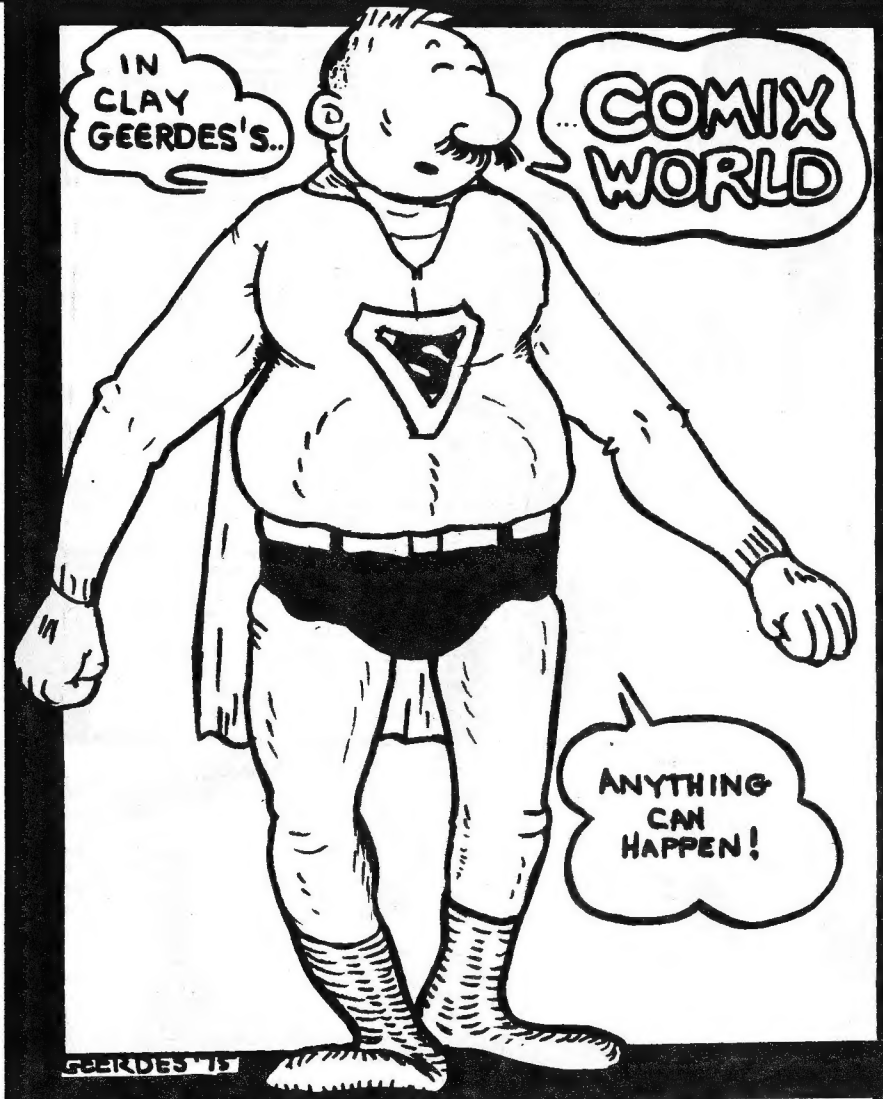

SISTERS
IT JUST DONT ADD UP...
1+1=11
HOW COME A WOMAN AT 30, IS "OVER THE HILL"..
WHILE A MAN, AT 30, IS JUST "REACHING HIS PEAK"?
YET, WHEN HE'S "SIX FEET UNDER" SHE'S STILL WALKING AROUND ...TEN YEARS LATER?!!

STRIP ART

21

COMIX WORLD 21. Copyright Clay Geerdes, 1975. This issue is dedicated to Winsor McCay, George McManus, George Herriman, Elzie Segar, Cliff Sterrett, Chic Young, Bill Holman, Milt Gross, H. T. Webster, and to those young artists today who are keeping alive the art of the comic strip. It's not an easy task. So many rules prevail these days that it is miraculous whenever any artist manages to get a strip accepted by a syndicate. As more and more underground papers die in the recession, the markets for underground strips go along with them. It seems unusual even to refer to ug strip art, because most of the ug artists used full pages, this being the accepted format in the ug papers. R. Crumb did strips, but they were usually laid out on pages and printed with half-pages or full page stories. In printing Sunday pages, there was usually some room left and it became standard practice for artists to do a strip to fill out the page. Bud Fisher did "Cicero's Cat," and Gil Shelton followed in that tradition with "Fat Freddy's Cat." As it happened with Fisher's Mutt and Jeff, the cat stole the show, and Shelton teamed up with David Sheridan early in 1974 to produce "Fat Freddy's Cat and His Friends." These pages are circulating in the underground papers and in 1975 will be anthologized in book form. Fisher never did a complete book on Cicero's Cat, but many of these pages appear in the Mutt and Jeff quarterlies published in the forties. Cicero was Mutt's nephew and his cat looked as much like him as Freddy's looks like him. The ug cartoonists of the sixties took off from the drawing styles of the twenties and thirties. If you want to see where Crumb is coming from, compare the Mr. Natural strips and stories with the early work of Segar, Gross, Willard, and Holman. In the late fifties, Crumb gave a nod to Holman when he did three issues of a little mag and called it FOO. This word was always showing up in Holman in his SMOKEY STOVER strips. He told an interviewer one time that he saw the word on a jade Chinese idol in an antique store. It meant 'Good Luck,' and he adopted it as a symbol, along with Notary Sojac, which meant Merry Christmas. Holman decided it was unnecessary for people to have to wait until the end of the year to be wished Merry Christmas, so he put in Notary Sojac nearly every week. The relationship between Smokey and the Fire Chief reminds me of the dialogues between Flakey Foont and Mr. Natural, and Flakey looks a lot like Smokey. Who's Mr. Natural? Is he The Yellow Kid grown up? Nov Schmoz Ka Pop? Segar's Sappo? He could be Swee'Pea grown up. What's certain is that the desert is right out of thirties Segar (who, no doubt, adapted it from George Herriman, who had Krazy Kat, Offisa Pup, and Ignatz living in it as early as 1909). The style of a Crumb panel varies, but his shading compares well with that of Milt Gross and Rube Goldberg. The strongest influence upon the early work of Shelton was Kurtzman's HEY! LOOK! pages. Both Crumb and Shelton published work in HELP!, one of a number of humor magazines done by Kurtzman after he left MAD in '56. In 1971, a number of ug cartoonists got together in the Air Pirates Collective, formed by Dan O'Neill, and began to study the styles of Segar, Herriman, Webster, and others. One of these was Bobby London who perfected his imitation of Herriman to the point where he could do the same ab-

By CLIFF STERRETT

NAOW YEW TEW ABIDE RIGHT HA'R AN' SHOOT TH' LIVIN' DAYLIGHTS AOUTA ENY PERKINS THET TRIES T' TAKE ENY O' THEIR'UNS PRODUCE T' MARKET!
WE'LL RIFLE-BALL 'EM T RIGHTEONESS, PAPPY.
PEPPER 'EM T' PARADISE, WE WILL!
GULP!
BANG
BANG
HEARD RIFLE-FIRIN'. YEW GIT A PERKINS?
NOPE, PAPPY, JIST SKEERED A ANGEL!!

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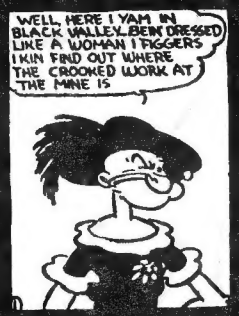
There are no rules when a form is new. Anything can happen and usually does. This was true when underground artists began to revive strip art in the sixties as it was when the form was new in the 1890's. Popeye was born in 1929, the same year as Hal Foster's Tarzan. Segar maintained Popeye's character as a spinach-eating strong man, but he did things with him that cartoonists working for the syndicates can no longer do. In the 30's transvestism was a staple in humor strips as well as screen comedies, but today's rules wouldn't permit a man to dress up in women's clothes as Popeye does in the strip on this page. Since the Comic Code of 1954, everything included in the strips and comic books is carefully censored. Could Sterrett have published the hillbilly strip with its obvious sexual meaning after 1954? It's doubtful. Crumb, Shelton, Sheridan, Irons, and the other young artists who broke with and defied the code in the sixties delighted in drawing sex and dope fantasies and in systematically violating all of the articles of the code. Both the text of the Code and the stories that broke it are contained in The Best of Rip-Off Press, volume 1. In the ug strips as in the mainstream dailies pre-code, one finds spontaneity and innovation. If it was funny, an artist put it in. The ugs have stimulated new freedom in the og strips. 12-15-74



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HEY-MEN-LOOK WHAT'S COMIN' DOWN THE TRAIL-A WOMAN!
A WOMAN!!!
SHE'S THE FIRST WOMAN WHAT'S BEEN IN VALLEYVILLE FOR CLOS'T ONTO TWENTY YEARS
LOOK-HANK-A WOMAN!
WOMAN? YOU MEAN ONE OF THEM THINGS YOU GET MARRIED TO
SURE-SURE-A WOMAN
SO THAT'S A WOMAN!!
KIND OF PERTY, AIN'T SHE?
SORTA
11-16

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(Cont'd from front) stract style, using characters that were whole beings as well as fragments of consciousness. London took Herriman's mock duck and turned him into The Dirty Duck (in Mickey Mouse Meets the Air Pirates Funnies--now difficult to get due to a lawsuit which was won by Walt Disney Productions) and later into Duck (National Lam Poon). Gary Hallgren worked with the styles of E. C. Segar (see POPEYE strip above, from 1934--this series is running in the Menomonee Falls Guardian, P. O. Box 255, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin 53051) and Cliff Sterrett (hillbilly strip on front side, 1937) while Shary Flenniken (Trots and Bonnie, Lampoon) derived her style from H. T. Webster and Clare Briggs. While these artists utilized the form of their predecessors, they put in their own content, and needless to say it was great fun to see Annie & London's other characters going to a Grateful Dead Concert in the landscape of Herriman, who died in 1944 right after the era of Swing and the Big Bands. The early strip artists were familiar with vaudeville and burlesque and silent movie comedies and it was only to be expected that a lot of theatrical routines would find their way into the dailies. Segar called his world, Thimble Theatre, when he started it in 1919, and to understand much of what went on in that world, the reader could do no better than to read John Dos Passos' 1919, James T. Farrell's Young Lonigan, or Sinclair Lewis's Main Street. Segar's SAPPO is a predecessor of both Crumb's Mr. Natural and Larry Todd's Dr. Atomic. Atomic began as a strip in John Bryan's THE SUNDAY PAPER. There were 7 issues of beautiful underground funnies before the project ran out of money. Those who set out to collect underground strips from this period will not want to miss this valuable work. Bryan may still have some of these available. You might want to write him at 79 Beaver St., San Francisco, Ca. For further info on ug strips, send me an SASE. -Clay Geerdes